



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Most Revd Emmanuel Mbona Kolini
Archbishop of Rwanda & Bishop of Kigali
and The Most Revd Datuk Ping Chung Yong
Archbishop of South East Asia & Bishop of Sabah

19 June, 2001

Dear Archbishop Kolini and Archbishop Yong

I have received further confirmation today, that you intend to consecrate four bishops in Denver on Sunday June 24th.

This news burdens and dismays me. You know that I have my own concerns about those bishops who are unwilling to adhere to the Lambeth resolutions - indeed, all the resolutions - and you know of the way I have persevered in drawing attention to the importance of fidelity to the faith of the Church, both in doctrine and behaviour. But I also have the greatest concern to see that all we who are called to Primacy in this historic Communion do everything in our power to strengthen our communion with one another.

What you are proposing to do cannot strengthen, but can only undermine, that communion. All this coming after the very strong commitment to the unity of the Primates at Oporto and Kanuga! There, we committed ourselves not to take action without proper consultation and serious consideration of the effects of further consecrations. All that seems to have been sadly and, perhaps, somewhat conveniently ignored. I simply cannot believe this is in conformity with the way Christ would want us to behave.

It is not right to trespass upon the ministry Our Lord, the Chief Shepherd, has committed to others. I cannot agree that you have no alternative but to take this further irregular step, in order to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints", as you assert. Let me make no bones about it. I regard last year's consecrations in Singapore as at best, highly irregular and at worst, simply schismatic. I have made my position in relation to them transparently clear - but, in case there remains any doubt, let me repeat: I cannot recognise John Rodgers and Chuck Murphy as bishops in communion with me unless they are fully reconciled to the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

The step you are now proposing to take compounds the problem created then. As bishops and primates in our Communion, you are yourselves men under authority. You may act lawfully only within the authority which is given to you. I gave no authority to the Province of South East

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Asia in 1996, to consecrate bishops for service elsewhere in the world; neither has the Province of Rwanda any authority over Anglicans outside its own Province. You have never given me any satisfactory answer to the question of the authority by which you claim to act. How am I to regard those who act without lawful authority?

What you propose to do is in blatant disregard of our Anglican ecclesiology. Even as *primus inter pares* of the Anglican Communion, I would not regard myself as having power to intervene in the way you are trying to do, in Provinces in which I have no lawful authority. It takes only a moment's reflection to imagine your reaction if I, or any of the other Primates of our Communion, were to presume to intervene in either of your two Provinces. Consider what confusion it would bring and what a scandal to our Communion!

I consider that the step you are proposing seriously compromises your commitment to the unity we as Primates sought and found at Kanuga only three months ago. I cannot support you if you persist in taking this action: to do so would undermine my own integrity as the leader of an ordered Communion. If your action has the support of the bishops and synods of your two Provinces, that raises still more troubling issues for our Communion, of a sort that I have no wish to contemplate.

However, I wonder if you as Primates do have the backing of your House of Bishops and your General Synod in the damaging action you are proposing to take? Are you and your Province aware that action of this kind takes you perilously close to creating a new group of churches at odds with the See of Canterbury and the rest of the Communion? I personally would regret this so very much as I have had the closest of dealings with Rwanda through all the troubles and the church there is still very much close to my heart! South East Asia, also, is a Province that I greatly love and would hope to visit again. My visit showed me how eager you were to strengthen your contribution to the Communion when with great joy I shared in that service which made you a Province.

I urge you both to think again. Even at this late stage, it is not too late for you to draw back from a step which can only do lasting damage. I note that the day you are intending to take this irrevocable action is the Birth of St John Baptist in the English calendar. John the Baptist saw his ministry as uplifting Christ. 'I am not worthy to untie his laces' he said. Such humility is so Christ centred. I ask you to consider that you may be wrong and I pray that you may have the humility and grace to move back from a step which would carry such dangers for our united witness to the world.

I know you will find this letter painful to read; it grieves me to have to write in these terms. But I want you to know that it comes with my love and warm greetings in Christ.

+ George Cantuar